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RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 3499
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DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON, AF/RSA, DRL/AE, AND AF/PDPA LISENBY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCOR](#) [KPAO](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: NIGER: GON Prosecution of Journalists Continues

Ref: Niamey 00072

1. On April 1, police arrested Mr. Abibou Garba, owner of private media group TV/Radio Dounia, on charges of "broadcasting false information," and transported him to detention at the headquarters of the Criminal Investigations Department (PJ).

2. Garba's arrest resulted from a debate broadcast on Dounia TV on March 27 regarding French President Nicolas Sarkozy's Niger visit. During the debate, civil society leader Elhaj Idi Abdou alleged that the true motive of Sarkozy's visit was to attend to private business concerns related to French energy company Areva. Areva board of directors chairperson Anne Lauvergeon accompanied Sarkozy as an official member of the delegation. Police had already arrested Elhaj Idi on March 31 on the same charge. Authorities released Garba and Idi on April 2 pending trial. No trial date has been announced.

3. In an earlier case, the court of appeals deferred a March 23 ruling on the appeal of Boussada Ben Ali, director of independent weekly "L'Action." The court convicted Ben Ali on February 6 of "disseminating information likely to undermine the public order" and sentenced him to three months incarceration (reftel). His lawyer, Me Yahouza, was also arrested on charges of "discrediting a court ruling" for his public criticism of the court's sentence. Rulings in both the Ben Ali and Yahouza cases are expected on April 13.

WHITAKER